

CHAPTER VII

GESEBAL HISTOBY, 1381-1385

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE. THE CRUSADE. DECLINE OF
 THE D<JKE'8 POWER. LONDON. PERSONAL
 GOVERNMENT BY RICHARD II.

AFTER the catastrophe of the Peasants' Eising, after so striking an exposure of governmental incapacity, after such an expression of the political no less than the social discontent of the nation, a good patriot might well have hoped for some change in the aims and methods of the politicians who had brought the country to such a pass. It might have been expected that the great families would be shamed out of their feuds and bickerings, that they would desist from the ignoble scramble for place and power, and unite to assist the young King and the Commons in rallying a disgraced, impoverished, and disorganised people. It might have been expected that Eichard, who had shown in Smithfield the courage of the race of Cceur de Lion tempered by a self-possession more rare in the House of Plantagenet, would by his firmness and wisdom lead the nation out of this period of panic into years of settled government. But no change took place. The warning fell unheeded on the ears of the selfish nobility, and the King proved to have grave faults as well as fine virtues. The history of the four years succeeding the Peasants' Eevolt is not the history of any conscious effort at national recovery. The moral tone of the political world remains as low, the aims of intriguers like John of Gaunt remain as personal and as short-sighted as ever, while even those few ministers who, like Scrope on one side, and Michael de la Pole on the other **were** honest public servants, proved incapable of suggesting